

**Suzanne Vega's** last album *99.9F°* (A&M) is wrapped up in interminable cleverness. Part of this is due to the arrangements of producer Mitchell Froom who'll use the slightest excuse to be weird, and part of it is Vega's penchant for preciousness. There's no doubting her singing or writing skills, but what could have been poetry comes off as calculated. There's plenty of good ideas such as "Blood Sings," "Fat Man and Dancing Girl," and "Bad Wisdom," but only "When Heroes Go Down" lasts a memorable song. Vega is so cool, detached and knowing on every song that they should have called it *88.8F°*. If she's this way in person, better keep your coat on and wear a sweater.

**Suzanne Vega with Kitchens of Distinction: Sat., Mar. 13 at 8 and 11 p.m. at TLA, 334 South St., \$18.50, 922-1011.**  
**--Peter Brown**